



monmouthshire  
sir fynwy

# CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposals to close Mounton House Special School

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## 1. Introduction

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Monmouthshire County Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient and suitable school places for children within its County, and in doing so ensure that resources and facilities are efficiently utilised to deliver the education opportunities that our children deserve.

The Council has a responsibility under the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to consult with appropriate stakeholders when considering any significant school reorganisation proposals.

The Council recently engaged in a statutory consultation process relating to the provision of services for children with Social and Emotional Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and in particular, the current provision offered at Mounton House Special School.

The purpose of undertaking the statutory consultation was to seek the views of our community, key stakeholders and partners on the proposal to close Mounton House Special School.

This consultation report now represents the council's responsibilities in line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 to produce a report seeking to inform interested parties of the outcome to the consultation by means of:

- Summarising each of the issues raised by consultees
- Responding to these by means of clarification, amendment to the proposal, or rejection to the concerns with supporting reasons
- Setting out Estyn's view (as provided in its consultation response) of the overall merits of the proposal.

## 2. Distribution of the Consultation Report

This consultation report is published on the Monmouthshire County Council Website [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation). We will contact the following consultees and interested parties directly to inform them of the publication of this document.

- Parents, Guardians and carers of all pupils at schools directly affected by the proposal
- Headteacher, staff and governors of schools directly affected by the proposal.
- Out of county Schools affected by the proposal.
- Pupils and Pupils' Councils of schools directly affected by the proposal
- Headteachers of all schools in MCC area
- All MCC Members
- Welsh Ministers
- All MCC Town and Community Councils
- All MCC Assembly Members representing the area served by the school
- All Members of Parliament representing MCC area
- Directors of Education of all bordering LAs – Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Powys, Torfaen, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire
- Directors of Education of affected LA's – Caerphilly, South Gloucestershire, Merthyr, Bristol, Rhondda Cynon Taff, North Somerset, Somerset, Swindon, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff
- Principals of Coleg Gwent
- MCC Youth Service
- GAVO
- Monmouthshire Governors Association
- Teaching Associations
- Support Staff Associations
- Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)
- Welsh Government
- ESTYN
- Church in Wales Diocesan Trust, Director of Education
- Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust, Director of Education
- South East Wales Education Achievement Service
- Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner
- SNAP Cymru Parent Partnership Service
- Local Health Board
- All interested parties responding to this consultation leaving relevant electronic contact details

### 3. Background to the review of ALN and Inclusion Services

Monmouthshire is committed to improving the educational achievement and attainment for all children and young people in in the county through the provision of an inclusive education system that places the child or young person at the centre.

Through our work with schools, parents and key partners, we seek to:

- Secure equality of access to education for all children and young people
- Deliver a high quality and inclusive curriculum for all learners
- Educate our children and young people in their local communities whenever possible
- Support children and young people and their families to enable them to live a happy and fulfilling life
- Provide meaningful opportunities for learners to access support when they need it and return to their community school as soon as they are able
- Meet the needs of children and young people now and be suitably adaptable to meet changing needs in the future

The aims above link directly to our Directorate core values, which aspire to ensure that all of our children and young people will:

- **Be ready for school** - through engagement with our Early Years and Flying Start programmes.
- **Be in school** - supported by our Access and Education Welfare teams.
- **Be well behaved** - through support from our Behaviour and Inclusion teams.
- **Be well taught** - by the teachers and teaching assistants in our schools.

Over the last five years, we have made progress towards fulfilling this commitment for the majority of our children and young people.

Most recently, the Local Authority consulted on changes to our provision for pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The Local Authority has commenced work on developing the final agreed model to meet the needs of these pupils. However, feedback in response to our consultation and significant financial cost of implementing proposals for our learners with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) meant that we needed to reconsider and reframe elements of our proposals further.

In our initial review, we included an analysis of current and projected pupil needs for SEBD. This analysis indicated that:

- Our existing SEBD provision did not meet the needs this group of all SEBD learners because the current provision within Monmouthshire is for boys only and between the ages of 11 years and 16 years. As a result, primary aged pupils and girls with SEBD are accessing education in a range of out of county placements.
- The proportion of primary and secondary fixed term exclusions shows an increasing trend over the past 5 years. The number of permanent exclusions have increased over the same period and particularly in the last three years.

Analysis of our exclusion data indicates that more children are presenting with challenging behaviour. Many of these learners have a range of wider additional learning needs that require additional and targeted resourcing to enable them to access education successfully.

- There is a need to support practitioners to develop skills and capacity within the school system to ensure that more pupils with SEBD are well supported within their local area and wherever possible in mainstream schools.
- The increasing financial pressures associated with the significant numbers of children and young people being educated outside Monmouthshire were not only having a significant impact on the overall provision for children and young people in schools, but also on other service areas such as the Passenger Transport Unit.
- Our current model would not enable us to meet the requirements of the ALN Act Wales (2018) and the draft 'Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales' (2018) when it is implemented from September 2020.

The aim of this reform programme is to secure equality of access to education for children and young people, with SEBD, to enable them to participate in, benefit from and enjoy learning by:

- **Securing excellent teaching and learning** to deliver a high quality and inclusive curriculum for all learners and in doing so this will underpin all our systems and processes
- **Building the capacity of schools** to educate their children and young people in their local community and within the Council wherever possible
- **Implementing systems and processes to facilitate early assessment, intervention and support** using a range of multi-agency providers including third sector organisations
- **Securing effective School to School and Cluster partnership arrangements** to become the key driver for the implementation of our strategy
- **Maintaining a consistent approach to nurture and well-being** to support learners and their families across the county
- **Securing effective and transparent multi-agency working** to ensure the best possible outcomes for learner's well-being and achievement
- **Maintaining home / host school registration and establishing revolving door arrangements** to provide opportunities for children and young people to access the support they need and return to their community wherever appropriate.
- **Securing good access to local, high quality, flexible provision** that is appropriate and is able to meet current and changing needs
- **Adopting an "invest to save"** approach in order to achieve best practice and build sustainability

The Council's Strategy, Policy and Procedures (Review October 2015) for Additional Learning Needs the ALN Policy sets out the guiding principles applied to ensure our proposed model of delivery addresses the local needs of our children as follows:

- All of our children and young people are valued, whatever their needs, so that they can experience success in their learning, reach their potential, enjoy high levels of well-being and maximise their life chances
- Meeting the needs of children and young people with ALN is a priority and is everyone's responsibility
- The overwhelming majority of children and young people are educated with their peers and in their local community
- Appropriate, specialist provision to meet the needs of most of our children and young people with ALN is available within the local authority
- All parties, including schools, parents and wider agencies work together and in the best interests of the child

In considering our options and developing our proposals we have paid due regard to the requirements of the Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 and the recommendations from Professor Donaldson's 'Successful Futures' Report (2015).

#### 4. A reminder of our proposal

The Local Authority consulted on proposals to close Mounton House Special School. The proposed closure date was initially 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019. However, this was later amended to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 to minimise the disruption to pupils of closing mid-year. Councillor Richard John, Executive Member for Children and Young People and MonLife announced this at the Council's Cabinet meeting in June 2019.

Should the outcome of statutory processes determine that statutory notices should be published that would give notice of the closure of Mounton House Special School the Council will consider the opportunities to invest in a new delivery model. Any future model will be designed to meet the full range of needs of children and young people residing within the county who have ALN including but not limited to those with SEBD.

## 5. Consultation Arrangements

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### Methodology

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On 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019, the Council's Cabinet approved the proposals to commence statutory consultation thereby allowing the Council to engage with key stakeholders on a new model for the delivery of Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion services.

In line with the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013, the Council produced a consultation document, published on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019, which also represented the commencement of the statutory consultation period. The formal consultation period lasted for a period of 6 weeks (including 20 school days) and concluded on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

The consultation document was distributed / links sent to all statutory consultees as listed under appendix 1 of this document. The consultation document also published on the Council's website at [www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/schoolreorganisation).

The Council raised awareness of the consultation through a marketing campaign, which included publications via the Council's social media networks.

Consultees were advised of the following opportunities to respond to the consultation proposals:

- Writing to School and Student Access Unit, Monmouthshire County Council, PO Box 106, Caldicot, NP26 9AN.
- Emailing [strategicreview@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:strategicreview@monmouthshire.gov.uk).
- Completing the response pro-forma (appendix 1) and returning it to School and Student Access Unit, Monmouthshire County Council, PO Box 106, Caldicot, NP26 9AN.

### Consultation Meetings

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As part of the consultation process, the Council held consultation sessions with staff, governors, parents and members of the community to ensure appropriate engagement with all interested parties who wished to learn about the proposal. These sessions were held on the following dates / times:

Consultee	Date	Venue
Staff	28 <sup>th</sup> March at 3.30pm	Mounton House Special School
Governors	28 <sup>th</sup> March at 4.30pm	Mounton House Special School
Parents / Interested parties	28 <sup>th</sup> March at 5.30pm	Mounton House Special School



Senior Officers of the council's directorate for children and young people attended all consultation sessions, providing interested parties with an opportunity to learn more about the proposals and ask any questions or raise any concerns.

Officers in attendance at the consultation meetings provided reassurance that any comments or concerns raised would be noted and fed into the consultation process. Consultees were also encouraged to submit their formal responses through any of the available methods.

Copies of the full consultation document and feedback proforma were available at each of the consultation sessions.

The key themes of concerns raised during the consultation meetings have been summarised and included as part of the overall responses received on page 10 of this document. In addition, full records of the engagement sessions held are available at appendix 3, 4 and 5 of this document.

## Consultation with children and young people

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The Council developed a “child friendly” version of the consultation document to ensure that children and young people on roll at Mounton House Special School could be fully engaged in the consultation process.

A consultation session took place on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019 with the children and young people of roll at Mounton House special School. Two officers of the Council, as well as the assistant Headteacher and ALNCo at Mounton House Special School facilitated the session.

A representative group of pupils met to discuss the consultation document and to ask the Council’s representatives questions. Some pupils were confident to meet as a group other pupils preferred to meet on an individual basis or in pairs. Participating pupils were given a copy of an accessible version of the consultation document and a response sheet. Copies of these documents were left at the school so that all pupils could have a chance to respond to the consultation. These documents were also emailed to the Head Teacher.

There was no formal structure to the meeting and the boys were given opportunities to speak freely and ask questions.

A summary of the feedback received from children and young people can be found under appendix 2 of this document.

## 6. Results and Comments

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### 6.1 Summary of consultation results

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The Council has received a number of responses to the consultation exercise. A broad profile of the respondents can be found in the table below:

<b>Respondent category</b>	<b>Number in Favour</b>	<b>Number not in Favour</b>	<b>Number inconclusive</b>	<b>Total</b>
Parent / Carer	1	34	0	35
Governor	0	2	0	2
Pupil	0	2	0	2
Staff	0	14	0	14
Other schools / staff	3	11	0	14
Community	4	41	0	45
Union	0	2	0	2
County Councillors	0	2	0	2
Other Organisations	4	1	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>123</b>

N.B. The above table reflects the number of formal responses received to this consultation only. However, feedback received from consultation sessions is reflected within section 6 of this report.

In addition to the above, the Council is aware of the petition named “Stop Mounton House School Closure” which has received 2,333 signatures. We have not considered this as a formal response to this consultation; however, it is referenced in this document as recognition of the level of opposition to the proposed closure.

### 6.2 Summary of comments / concerns

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The table below shows a summary of the comments and concerns raised during the consultation period together with the Council’s response. The comments and concerns have been drawn and summarised from the written responses received together with the feedback given during the consultation meetings.

<b>Theme 1</b>	<b>Concern at the impact proposals will have on the Children and Young People</b>	
The school provides a unique in county resource for children who can't cope in mainstream education. Without the school and professional support these boys will suffer.	Mounon House has a very small number of Monmouthshire secondary aged boys on roll (0.75% (seven pupils) of the SEN population in Monmouthshire in September 2019). There is no provision for primary aged pupils or girls within the Local Authority.	
<b>Travelling Distances</b>		
<b>Summary comment / concern</b>	<b>LA response</b>	
Closure will mean significant travelling distances to other resources outside of the county, which will be hugely disruptive and emotionally / psychologically damaging.	Monmouthshire is a rural Local Authority and many children travel some distance to their schools.	
Pupils with behavioural issues will not be able to cope with this long journey every day.	An analysis of travelling distances to proposed new provisions post 2020 indicates that only two pupils would be affected.	
<b>Alternative offer to Children and young people</b>		
<b>Summary comment / concern</b>	<b>LA response</b>	
There is no alternative provision for those currently educated there	Monmouthshire will work with the relevant Local Authorities, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway. Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.	
The closure of Mounon House Special School is unnecessary and likely to be harmful to the wellbeing of pupils.		
If the School closes what will happen to its pupils who lack basic skills and have no inspirations. The proposal does not give details on this and is vague on what provisions will be made available. There are no indication that suitable placements have been identified that would provide the nurture and therapies the pupils need and which are currently provided at Mounon House School.		
<b>Placing children and young people into Mainstream education</b>		
<b>Summary comment / concern</b>	<b>LA response</b>	
The children at Mounon House are some of the most vulnerable we have in the County. With all the associated challenges that they have, placing them in mainstream settings will have a detrimental impact these group of learners, and have a detrimental effect on the confidence and progress achieved by the staff at Mounon House	Unless recommended by the Annual Review process, Monmouthshire is not proposing to move any pupils currently attending Mounon House School to a mainstream provision.	
	Monmouthshire will work with, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could include bespoke provision	

Many children benefit from the education they receive here. Mainstream school is not appropriate, as schools at present do not have the time or facilities in which these pupils need. The council's will continue to make future cutbacks in education as children on the spectrum are already suffering due to this.

Disruption to the boys' education. Putting them into mainstream schools won't help them as mainstream did not work the first time around. Specific environment to suit the boys' needs- sensory room provided to deal with their needs. Boys would struggle to build trust and new relationships with staff in their new schools. Staff at Mounon school have specific training to understand boys' needs that would not be available at the same level in mainstream schools. Class sizes would be much bigger and too much for the boys to cope with, resulting in disruption for whole classes.

Closure of Mounon House could involve the transfer of SEBD children to existing schools. While we accept that MCC would take measures to facilitate such moves, it is unlikely that facilities and care of an equal standard will be achievable. Mounon House has individual timetables, a range of vocational courses, a therapy area and other facilities that mainstream schools would not be able to match. Mounon House pupils are strongly of the opinion that they would not thrive in mainstream schools.

The staff are highly trained and well equipped to deal with emotional and behavioural disorders and the dispersal of this expertise will be disastrous for the pupils

Disruption to the boys' education. Staff at Mounon school have specific training to understand boys' needs that would

run by staff experienced in managing young people with challenging behaviour.

Monmouthshire would provide support to pupils and their families and work in partnership with any proposed new provision to ensure minimum disruption, secure continuity and ensure a successful transition.

not be available at the same level in mainstream schools.

**Theme 2**

**Impact that the proposal will have on other Schools / Pupils**

**A concern that local schools will be negatively impacted by the proposed closure**

Summary comment / concern

LA response

Whilst recognising the need to save money during this time of austerity, and supporting the decision to close Mounon House Special school to better deploy staff and financial resources, we need reassurance that the secondary mainstream schools will not be negatively impacted by these proposals and expected to meet the significant needs that these children have

Unless recommended by the Annual Review process, Monmouthshire is not proposing to move any pupils currently attending Mounon House School to a mainstream provision.

The decision will place unworkable pressures on local education providers

The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources so that interventions can be delivered earlier in schools to support pupils more effectively. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.

The proposal will have a detrimental impact on mainstream children who want to learn and should be given this opportunity without being disrupted by these children who would no longer have the provision they need.

The other schools in the area are over-populated and cannot provide the appropriate requirements to deal with special needs such as ensuring a restorative, holistic and dyslexia-friendly school environment for young persons with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

**Impact on alternative Special Needs Resource Bases**

Two new secondary schools have been built without any consideration that special accommodation for SEBD pupils (rather than units for ALN pupils already taught in mainstream schools) would need to be made available. The impact of this on SEBD and mainstream pupils has not been considered.

It is our long held belief that the vast majority of children and young people with ALN, which includes pupils with SEBD, should be educated in mainstream settings alongside their peers. Inclusion is a key aspiration for our education services.

Transferring the SEBD children to other schools would present significant maintenance issues. Immediate repairs are often required to avoid closure of sections of the school. While Mounon

Some children with more complex needs will require alternative, specialist provision.

House has staff to do this, other schools do not. Indeed, the maintenance budget of the two new schools has been cut on the assumption that they will need very little maintenance over the next five years.	Unless recommended by the Annual Review process, Monmouthshire is not proposing to move any pupils currently attending Mounton House School to a mainstream provision.
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Theme 3	A view that the Council should consider alternatives to closure
Summary comment / concern	LA response
The ALN review last year gave categorical assurances that provision would be expanded on the Mounton House site to meet a growing in county need. Investment should be made in county to meet this need rather than closing the school.	<p>In 2018, the Council consulted on extending the provision at Mounton House Special School to meet a wider range of additional needs. The proposal included providing provision for both boys and girls and the full age range.</p> <p>Cabinet did not progress the development of an overarching special school following the previous consultation exercise. There were two reasons for this: the management structure of the proposed new special school. The consultation <i>'highlighted a significant level of concern from some consultees towards the proposals to place the management of the SNRB centres with the new special school. The concerns focussed around governance arrangements, responsibilities and a risk of causing segregation of our children and young people on these sites.'</i></p> <p>Secondly, the feasibility works undertaken identified that the site / building would require significant investment (circa £6.4 million) to enable the implementation of this proposal. Therefore, this option was not taken forward through the political process. It was agreed that this would be recast and this is the subsequent consultation.</p>
We need provision in Monmouthshire for pupils with SEBD and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). These pupils are vulnerable and need specialist provision in a smaller school environment as they struggle to cope in larger settings even if they have support. The specialist provision should be changed to meet a wider range of	<p>The Local Authority agrees that specialist provision is required to cater for the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• girls and boys,</li> <li>• a wider age range of pupils</li> <li>• to meet the identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which includes ASD.</li> </ul>

<p>needs utilising the expertise built up within Mounon House.</p>	<p>ASD is the largest single diagnosis of ALN in Monmouthshire and the fastest growing.</p> <p>The ability to 'change' a school is not simple endeavor.</p>
<p>The needs within our County are increasing so better management and investment is needed in these critical services not removing them.</p>	<p>The Local Authority agrees that specialist provision is required to cater for both genders, a wider age range of pupils and to meet the full range of identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which includes ASD.</p>
<p>School and staff would be willing to make changes to accommodate other pupils with additional needs.</p>	<p>The Local Authority fully recognises the skills and experience of the current staff, however; these are predominately related to secondary boys with SEBD.</p> <p>The Local Authority requires staff with the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p>
<p>Removing the need for a statement and widening admission criteria would solve the issue of low numbers and MHS would return to being an investment for MHS whilst alleviating the pressure mounting on neighbouring provisions.</p>	<p>Monmouthshire Local Authority currently requires pupils who attend specialist provision to have a statement of SEN to ensure that the graduated response has been followed by schools and that pupils are appropriately placed. This will change with the introduction of Individual Development Plans (IDPs).</p> <p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation.</p> <p>The Local Authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p>
<p>While we understand the financial issues behind closure, we believe they can be dealt with through an alternative strategy. The high unit costs given by MCC are predicated on low pupil numbers, but with a more flexible approach to admissions criteria (e.g. to</p>	<p>The very low Monmouthshire pupil numbers referred for a placement reflect the number of secondary aged boys with SEBD as their sole or primary identified area of need.</p>



<p>include girls, to widen the age range and to admit ASD pupils) numbers could be increased significantly. The changes could be carried out in stages in order to minimise the annual cost of building work. We believe that even with the existing admissions criteria there is also scope for increasing admissions from other authorities.</p>	<p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation.</p> <p>The Local Authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p> <p>During the recent past, neighbouring authorities in the wider Gwent region have developed their own provision in meeting the needs of children with challenging behaviour and those with ASD.</p>
<p>We feel that a better alternative approach would be: *to guarantee the future of Mounton House for a number of years in order to give other authorities confidence that pupils sent to the school would, where appropriate, be able to complete their education there. *widen the admissions criteria (to include ASD , girls, wider age range) perhaps using a step by step approach in order to keep immediate costs to a reasonable level. *consider how Mounton House could be used for relatively short-term placements.</p>	<p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation.</p> <p>The local authority would require staff who have the appropriate experience, specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p> <p>The retention of Mounton House Special School on this basis would not provide certainty for pupils or other authorities. The purpose of this consultation was to seek clarity for all stakeholders.</p> <p>Monmouthshire has a Pupil Referral Unit that has the expertise and capacity to provide short-term placements for both boys and girls of secondary age. Recent investment in 'in-reach' support to schools augments this resource further.</p>
<p>In order to make the School financially viable the Authority I think needs to look at options to increase pupil numbers such as outsourcing the staff expertise, widening its admissions criteria to include for example a sixth form, girls, short-term rest spite placements or other additional learning needs.</p>	<p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation.</p> <p>The local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people</p>

	<p>with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p> <p>The changes suggested, whilst attractive, would require significant capital investment.</p> <p>As a Council, we have tried to work with Mouton House to share their expertise across all of our school settings.</p>
<p>If the admissions panel were able to be more flexible then MHS would have more pupils and in time could again earn MCC money again.</p>	<p>Mouton House staff have always attended the admission panel and take an active part in panel decisions regarding admissions. Pupils with ASD have not been considered for admission given the school's designation with Welsh Government and skill set of staff within the school.</p>
<p>Primary schools within Monmouthshire are saying they need help with their pupils, we can provide that if we take away the statement process.</p>	<p>The local authority agrees that earlier identification and intervention is beneficial for all; the schools and the pupils benefit from this and it is the stated aim of the new ALN and Tribunal Act.</p> <p>However, Mouton House is designated for secondary aged boys only and is unable to support primary schools directly.</p>
<p>There are many children statemented with ASD within Monmouthshire, staff within the school are able to support and teach these children, why are we sending them out of county?</p>	<p>The Local Authority agrees that provision needs to be developed for children and young people with ASD within a whole authority ASD strategy.</p> <p>However this is not the current designation of Mouton House and as such it is not fit for purpose to meet the needs of Monmouthshire pupils with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>We believe that even with the existing admissions criteria there is also scope for increasing admissions from other authorities.</p>	<p>Mouton House staff have always attended the admission panel and take an active part in panel decision regarding admissions.</p> <p>Pupils with ASD have not been considered for admission given the schools designation with Welsh Government and skill set of staff within the school.</p>

	<p>Neighbouring LAs have or are in the process of developing their own provision and some have indicated they do not have confidence in Mounon House as a provision.</p>
<p>Let the pupils from other authorities play out their time, yet future admissions would only include Monmouthshire pupils. Allow one year for us to show that we can be full to capacity. By making these changes the benefits will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial gain for Monmouthshire when at capacity, reducing the cost per pupil</li> <li>• Knock on effect that will lessen the burden on mental health services, drug/alcohol abuse, crime and unemployment in the future</li> <li>• Supporting the mental health of current pupils with the level of care, guidance and support they receive at MHS</li> </ul>	<p>The Local Authority has considered the impact of closure on existing pupils and details elsewhere in this report how it proposes to meet the needs of them going forward.</p>
<p>In order to make the School financially viable the Authority I think needs to look at options to increase pupil numbers such as outsourcing the staff expertise, widening its admissions criteria to include for example a sixth form, girls, short-term rest spite placements or other additional learning needs.</p>	<p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p> <p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation.</p> <p>The local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p>
<p>The provision for pupils across Monmouthshire is unsatisfactory because it simply does not exist for girls and for primary aged pupils. This is</p>	<p>The Local Authority agrees that provision needs to be developed. However, it also recognises that there is a requirement to support all of our children with ALN.</p>

unacceptable. The council should expand the school to deal with 3-18 year olds, both male and female, who are otherwise disruptive to other students within mainstream classrooms.	Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.
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<b>Theme 4</b>	<b>A view that the provision offered at Mounton House is unique and cannot be offered elsewhere</b>	
Summary comment / concern	LA response	
The School not only offers academic qualifications but also a wide range of vocational qualifications onsite such as mechanics, plumbing, painting and decorating and photography. What other provisions in Monmouthshire offers this?	<p>Whilst recognising this as a positive development, the Local Authority believes that any special school needs to provide a range of vocational courses for its pupils. However as previously stated Mounton House is exclusively for boys and does not provide the same opportunities for girls.</p> <p>Other settings such as the Pupil Referral Service (PRS) offers vocational courses for both boys and girls.</p>	
The reason the pupils have been referred to the School is mainly that they were at risk of permanent exclusion so returning them to the mainstream school environment will not work for them. The need to reduce permanent exclusions was a priority of the Inclusion Report. The School has built relationships with outside agencies such as Social Services, the Police, MIST, the Youth Offenders Services etc. Will this information/contact be lost if the School closes?	<p>Unless recommended by the Annual Review process, Monmouthshire is not proposing to move any pupils currently attending Mounton House School to a mainstream provision.</p> <p>The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p>	
I believe that Mounton House School provides a highly valuable service to parents and young people in my local area of Chepstow. To close this facility would suggest that the county council	Currently Mounton House does not offer equality of access as it only offers provision for secondary aged boys aged 11-16.	

<p>does not wish to adhere to the Equalities Act.</p>	<p>The number of children from the local area is very small and has been over the past period. Currently, there are no pupils from the local area attending the school or expected to attend the school from September 2019. Over the past five years, numbers have been consistently very low.</p> <p>There are two pupils from the Caldicot area, four from Abergavenny and one from Monmouth.</p>
<p>The School provides excellent teaching and should remain open</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognises the work of the current staff and noted the work undertaken following the last Estyn inspection report when teaching was judged to be adequate.</p> <p>However, the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>The staff at Mounton are highly trained, dedicated and caring and are committed to providing every young person in their care with the opportunity to reach their full potential. The school has a strong record of success, with their young people moving on to further education, employment and training.</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognises the work of the current staff however; the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>Every young person has the right to receive an education no matter of their abilities. I have witnessed first hand the amazing and specialist work that staff at this school does and how they help all the young people that come through their doors, helping them to become ready to succeed in life.</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognises the work of the current staff however; the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>Mounton House School offers a range of specialised services to help their pupils and should be praised. The site is exceptional. The grounds and building are unique and fit for purpose although the Authority has not funded the maintenance of some of the buildings. What other site in Monmouthshire offers vocational studies courses, social care, general qualifications and a residential</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognises the work of the current staff however; the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p> <p>Other settings such as PRS also offers vocational courses for both boys and girls.</p>

<p>provision? Has the Authority considered if it is making the most of this provision?</p>	<p>Whilst the grounds are exceptional, areas of the current building require significant investment to bring it up to both current building standards and health and safety regulations.</p>
<p>The staff are highly trained and have a great relationship with the pupils. Managing difficult behaviours is not easy and teaching how to change these emotions more so. This expertise should not be lost. The School has established relationships with the Police, Social Services, the Youth Offenders Services, safeguarding agencies, health care agencies, other Local Authorities etc which help to improve so many young people's lives and therefore Monmouthshire society as a whole.</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognises the work of the current staff however; the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p> <p>All of Monmouthshire schools and educational services e.g. the PRS have positive relationships with partner agencies, these are not unique to Mounon House.</p>
<p>The school provides an invaluable service for vulnerable young boys with psychological &amp; emotional issues.</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognises the work of the current staff however; the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people including girls, with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>Many children benefit from the education they receive here. Mainstream school is not appropriate as schools at present do not have the time or facilities in which these pupils need.</p>	<p>The Local Authority recognises the work of the current staff however; the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p> <p>Unless recommended by the Annual Review process, Monmouthshire is not proposing to move any pupils currently attending Mounon House School to a mainstream provision.</p>
<p>There are no indications that suitable placements have been identified that would provide the nurture and therapies the pupils need and which are currently provided at Mounon House School.</p>	<p>Monmouthshire will work with the placing Local Authorities, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p>

	Mounton House Special School does not provide recognised clinical therapies but does provide access to some treatments for the students.
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<b>Theme 5</b>	<b>Concern that there is no alternative provision for children with SEBD</b>
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Summary comment / concern	LA response
I am concerned about the education provision for pupils in Monmouthshire with SEBD. I believe we have a need for this provision and these pupils will not sustain a placement in a mainstream setting. The authority needs to be improving these provisions not to be removing them. Monmouthshire needs more specialist provision not less.	The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.
There are insufficient publicly funded alternative locations / places available in county, or even within SE Wales for those pupils (male & particularly female) who are unable to access mainstream education, as a result of social & emotional & behavioural difficulties & who really need an alternative education provision.	The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.  Other neighbouring Local Authorities are developing, or have already developed, provision to meet the needs of their own children and young people with challenging behaviour.
I am worried that MCC will not have any provision within the authority for pupils with behavioural issues. This will be a major loss in MCC's provision for pupils of all abilities and special needs. The alternative provision of a provider in the county which is a private provider and not under the control of the authority. The other provision in an another authority will involve a journey of at least an hour and a half to Penarth.	The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.  Analysis of our ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest

	<p>identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. The Local Authority recognises the need to develop further provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>
<p>The number of pupils with serious behavioural issues will not decline and MCC has a duty to offer them in county good quality provision .</p>	<p>Analysis of our ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. Pupils with ASD are the cohort of children that has grown most significantly in recent past and that trend looks set to continue.</p> <p>ASD pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to develop further provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>
<p>I feel that there has not be any long term solutions given for the SEBD boys currently in county.</p>	<p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p>
<p>Last year MCC were consulting to expand their provision for ALN which shows there is a need within Monmouthshire.</p>	<p>The consultation did not gain widespread support and did not progress through the political process.</p>
<p>The number of fixed term exclusions is increasing, suggesting a growing need for special provision.</p>	<p>The vast majority of pupils with fixed term exclusion would not be considered for special school provision.</p> <p>The earlier intervention which the Local Authority is putting in place in all its secondary schools will enable schools to provide targeted support and reduce numbers of fixed term exclusions.</p>
<p>There will always be a need to place pupils with emotional and behavioural</p>	<p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support</p>



<p>needs in a specialist setting away from a mainstream school</p>	<p>pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p> <p>The Local Authority agrees that there will be a need to place a very small number of pupils in specialist settings.</p>
<p>The authority need to be improving these provisions not to be removing them. Monmouthshire needs more specialist provision not less.</p>	<p>The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p>
<p>There are not enough provisions in Monmouthshire as it is for children with Additional Learning Needs so shouldn't be taking away the ones we have</p>	<p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p>
<p>Where would all the current children go and any future children that need that level of support. There are a lot of new housing estates being built around Caldicot , Magor , Chepstow and the families children need to go to school. All the schools in the local areas are over subscribed so closing a special school where it's needed will have an impact on all the other schools , such as congestion, which brings pollution.</p>	<p>Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.</p> <p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p> <p>From September 2019, there will be sixteen pupils on roll at Mounton House,</p>

	<p>eight of whom either reside in Monmouthshire or form Monmouthshire's responsibility as the Corporate Parent. Unless recommended by an Annual Review none of these pupils would be allocated a place in a mainstream secondary school. For September 2020 this number would fall to 5 pupils.</p>
<p>My daughter's education has been continually disrupted by the presence in her class of a boy with clear SEBD who should not be anywhere near mainstream education. The Council should look at how difficult it is for youngsters to get statemented as a reason behind the declining pupil numbers at MHS.</p>	<p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p> <p>The Local Authority adheres to the regulations and guidance regarding statutory assessment as outlined in the SEN Code of Practice for Wales. The relatively high percentage of children with a statement of special educational need in Monmouthshire (just over 3%) would suggest that there is not a decline in the number of children with statements in the county. However, the majority of statements are for children and young people with ASD not solely SEBD. Mounton House School does not admit pupils with this diagnosis, which supports the local authority's view regarding the future of the school.</p>
<p>Centralising any service reduces quality and actually increases cost in the long term. Keep kids local to their schools.</p>	<p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide additional resources to provide earlier interventions for schools and to support pupils. This investment is part of a graduated pathway to respond to pupils' needs as they progress through school. Staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour will deliver this additional support.</p>
<p>The Council is choosing to invest in sending pupils with a high level of need to out of county placements rather than</p>	<p>The Council is trying to utilise its resources to best effect for the majority of pupils. For all children who require</p>

<p>investing in its own in county provision. This is complete mismanagement</p>	<p>additional support we follow an informed and graduated response through their mainstream school.</p> <p>Only when all alternatives have been tried and exhausted would we look to place out of county at an independent setting.</p> <p>Monmouthshire is a small authority and scale prohibits provision for some of the most complex needs. Where this does happen, we place the child in the most appropriate setting to meet their individual needs..</p>
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Theme 6	Concerns towards the processes associated with this consultation	
Summary comment / concern	LA response	
<p>The consultation document is bizarrely flawed, biased and incomplete to the point of being fraudulent. It does not provide the necessary information of what alternative provision will be made, explain the reasons why children from out of area will no longer be using the services (thereby undermining the financial situation - and whether this can be changed), bizarrely attempts to suggest that no children using the services will emerge from younger ages in the next few years (though this information must be available) and seems to have been created solely to justify a closure decision.</p>	<p>Monmouthshire has a duty to all the pupils it currently educates including those at Moun-ton House.</p> <p>The original consultation document did provide information about future Local Authority provision however not all of this was progressed by political approval.</p> <p>The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p> <p>ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. These pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to further develop its provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>	
<p>The ALN review undertaken 12 months ago gave reassurance of expanding in county provision and Moun-ton House</p>	<p>Proposals in the ALN review consultation 2018 were not widely</p>	

formed part of this. Categorical and absolute assurances were given that the removal of some existing provision (e.g. “middle tier at Caldicot”) would be compensated through expanding in county provision. The process has been dishonest and therefore the review should be reopened.

supported and did not progress in their entirety.

The element that secured political approval was for the local authority to invest in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.

The review set out that the Special Needs Resource Base (SNRB) in Caldicot School would no longer support pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This is entirely in line with the expectations of the new ALN and Education Tribunal Act. These children would not require provision at a county level.

The review has been transparent and open through all of its stages.

Monmouthshire County Council need to have in place a viable alternative for the educational needs of the pupils before any decision is taken to close

Monmouthshire will work with the home LA, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.

Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.

These decisions will be concluded significantly in advance of July 2020.

Rather than being part of a fully worked out long term strategy, it appears to be a proposal made in haste as a result of unexpected difficulties encountered during the ALN review. We reject the argument put forward in some consultation meetings that the ALN review included a proposal to close Mounton House in that the original proposal was to change and enhance its role and rename it. This is very different from closing down the school and making staff redundant.

The original proposal in the initial consultation was to change the role and function of Mounton. To secure this proposal the process that needed to have been followed would have been closure of the existing Special School and re-opening a new Special School that could cater for a wider range of identified need.

Even with the initial proposal, the Local Authority recognised that the skills and experience of the majority of the current

	<p>staff focus on working with secondary boys with SEBD and the Local Authority would have required staff with the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p>
<p>The consultation document is unclear on its reasons for closing the school and the driving factor behind this. Is this simply signs of cutting costs again?</p>	<p>The Local Authority has identified that specialist provision is required to cater for the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• girls and boys,</li> <li>• a wider age range of pupils, and</li> <li>• to meet the identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which would include ASD.</li> </ul> <p>The Local Authority needs to utilise existing resources to meet this wider range of provision.</p>
<p>The fall in numbers from these authorities in recent years has at least in part been due to uncertainty over the future of the school over a number of years (e.g. having been categorised red). The school has made huge strides since this and is now categorised yellow, but authorities will need certainty that the school will remain open before sending their pupils.</p>	<p>Responses from neighbouring authorities are included in this documentation.</p> <p>Whilst the uncertainty regarding the school's future is a factor, comments also include concerns regarding the quality of provision and consistency of behaviour management.</p>
<p>The timing behind the proposals is completely inappropriate. Closure by December 2019 does not give time for alternative proposals to be developed, carefully considered, consulted upon and put into place. Closure in December, part way through the school year, would be detrimental to pupils and make it more difficult for staff to find alternative employment. Job losses have not been synchronised with the creation of posts under the ALN review.</p>	<p>The Local Authority has recognised that closing in December would not be in pupil's best interests and has extended the proposed date of closure to August 2020.</p> <p>Should proposals to close Mounton House Special School proceed, all staff would be placed 'at risk' and supported to find alternative employment where possible in line with the Protection of Employment Policy for School Based Employees.</p> <p>Given the nature of the consultation exercise the staff have not been placed 'at risk' as per the protection of</p>

	<p>employment policy. However, HR officers held individual meetings with staff and confirmed their options. Every opportunity available through the directorate's ALN team were sent to staff.</p> <p>In the main staff felt they didn't want to leave as they wanted to see the outcome of the consultation exercise, however, some have left for external posts.</p>
<p>The consultation proposals contain no details of alternative strategies. The consultations document merely states: "Should the proposals to close Mounton House Special School proceed following statutory process, the Council will consider the opportunities to invest in a new delivery model that meets the full range of needs of children and young people residing within the county who have Social and emotional Behavioural difficulties." This is vague in the extreme. It makes no reference to the time that it takes to establish such a model, test its viability and establish its costs.</p>	<p>As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils presenting with challenging behaviour in Monmouthshire, the local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p> <p>There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report that highlight how the current cohort's needs will be met.</p> <p>Analysis of ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. These pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to develop further provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>
<p>The proposal makes no sense. The School is such an asset to the Authority offering a valuable and unique service to the most vulnerable young people in society.</p>	<p>Mounton House School is only able to offer provision to boys aged 11-16 with SEBD. The extremely narrow criteria means that there is no specialist provision offer for vulnerable primary pupils and girls with highly complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p> <p>The school currently offers its service to only seven Monmouthshire pupils.</p>
<p>If MHS closes I feel like it will be a short term cash fix which will not solve the long term need that Monmouthshire will face.</p>	<p>As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils presenting with challenging behaviour in Monmouthshire, the local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p>

	<p>There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report that highlights how the current cohort's needs will be met.</p> <p>Analysis of ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. These pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to develop further provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>
<p>The proposal does not give details on this and is vague on what provisions will be made available.</p>	<p>As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils with Behaviour within the Local Authority, The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p> <p>There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report which highlight how the current cohort's needs will be met.</p> <p>ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. These pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to develop further provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>
<p>There is no reference to the time that it takes to establish such a model, test its viability and establish its costs.</p>	<p>As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils with Behaviour within the Local Authority, The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p> <p>These posts are accounted for and recruitment processes have been undertaken.</p>

	<p>There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report that highlight how the current cohort's needs will be met.</p>
<p>The fall in numbers from these authorities in recent years has at least in part been due to uncertainty over the future of the school over a number of years (e.g. having been categorised red).</p>	<p>Responses from neighbouring authorities are included in this documentation. Whilst the uncertainty regarding the school's future is a factor comments include concerns regarding the quality of provision and consistency of behaviour management.</p> <p>Other Local Authorities have also developed their own provision to meet the needs of pupils with challenging behaviour.</p> <p>The process of categorisation is a function fulfilled in partnership by the Educational Achievement Service (EAS) and the Local Authority. It reflects the level of support that any school requires. At the time of its red categorisation, the school was in the statutory Estyn Category of '<i>Requiring Significant Improvement</i>'.</p>
<p>MCC should have spent the money they had on this school and education rather than Spytty Park.</p>	<p>The money allocated to the acquiring the commercial development has come from a different funding stream and this resource would not have been able to be used to spend on education.</p>
<p>It is right to close the school, however there appears to be no current plans to improve provision for pupils with needs that cannot be met within mainstream education. Exploring opportunities' for alternative provision is nowhere close to providing seamless support &amp; services to these very vulnerable and needy children and young people.</p>	<p>This is the view of the Local Authority as resources need to be utilised to provide investment for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a wider age range of pupils</li> <li>• meet the identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which would include ASD.</li> <li>• ALN provision for girls and boys,</li> </ul> <p>As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils presenting with challenging behaviour within the Local Authority, The Local Authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p>



	<p>There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report that highlight how we will meet the current cohort's needs.</p> <p>Analysis of ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. These pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to develop further provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>
<p>Due to your extensive building plans laid out in your LADP there is going to be increased demand on other schools in the County...It also feels that this might be an opportunity to gain some prime building land!</p>	<p>There are no plans to utilise the site of the school for any other purposes. Restrictions on the access to the site preclude residential development.</p>
<p>A view that the Council has not provided accurate projections on future need at Mounton House Special School</p>	<p>The trend in ALN requirements has seen significant growth in the category of ASD.</p> <p>These figures will be set out in the body of the Cabinet Report that considers this consultation report.</p>
<p>The pupil friendly version of the consultation document is only available to those affected by the proposals. Are all pupils in all schools not affected if pupils with ESBG are placed in mainstream?</p>	<p>Unless recommended by the Annual Review process, Monmouthshire is not proposing to move any pupils currently attending Mounton House School to a mainstream provision.</p>
<p>The consultation document does not suggest an alternative delivery model which indicates a lack of planning by the LA and a mismanagement of resources</p>	<p>As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils presenting with challenging behaviour within the Local Authority, The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p> <p>There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report which highlight how the current cohort's needs will be met.</p> <p>ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils</p>

	with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. These pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to develop further provision, which includes this group of pupils.
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### 6.3 Specific comments / concerns raised by Headteacher of Mounton House

The below table summarises the key concerns raised by the Headteacher at Mounton House Special School:

<b>Summary of concerns raised</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be a well-planned, fully costed 3<sup>rd</sup> option.</li> <li>• There is clear need across the authority ( not truly reflected by MHS numbers) for the provision if it had wider age &amp; designation</li> <li>• Staff skill and resilience is now at risk of being lost</li> <li>• Current provision across MCC for vulnerable learners in MCC is poor as displayed by increasing figures of FTE &amp; PX</li> <li>• There is still a demand for provision from other authorities so there remains the possibilities of the school bringing in revenue</li> <li>• To date we have seen no evidence of any plans for the £6 million capital needed to improve the building. The LA is shortsighted in how it could use WG capital available for ALN funding.</li> <li>• There is a lack of business planning or vision for how MHS could be used across agencies</li> <li>• The consultation is poor and lacks any real detail of how learners will be supported</li> </ul>
<b>Local Authority Response</b>
<p>As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils with Behaviour within the Local Authority, the local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils. This has increased the capacity of the PRU from 15 full time places to 36 full time places. 24 of these places allow the Local Authority to provide earlier intervention.</p> <p>There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report, which highlight how the current cohort’s needs will be met.</p> <p>The Local Authority has a relatively high percentage of children with a statement of special educational need at just over 3%. However, the single largest element of this population are for children and young people with ASD and not behavioural difficulties. We do however recognise that challenging behaviour can be symptomatic of children with ASD but we are also clear that the underlying</p>

condition requires a different approach to that of a child with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Mounton House School does not admit pupils with this diagnosis, which supports the local authority's view regarding the future of the school. The Local Authority agrees that provision needs to be developed.

Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.

The Local Authority continues to have relatively low rates of permanent exclusion when compared with neighbouring Local Authorities and statistical neighbours. The Local Authority works hard with schools to avoid the need for permanent exclusion uses managed moves and intervention from the Pupil Referral Service. However, there have been incidences whereby schools have determined that they need to permanently exclude a pupil to ensure that the pupil could not return given the seriousness of the event or preceding events.

Rates of fixed term exclusion have increased across the consortia this academic year including in Monmouthshire. The investment in earlier intervention in secondary schools should impact positively upon the rates of fixed term exclusion across secondary provision within the Local Authority as head teachers have raised concerns previously that there is no earlier intervention for pupils displaying challenging behavioural issues. We do not believe that the provision of an 'off-site' special school for pupils with challenging behaviour is an appropriate response to increased levels of fixed term exclusions. The challenge facing all schools and educational services is to be as inclusive as possible and provide an engaging curriculum for all.

Responses from neighbouring authorities are included in this documentation. Whilst the uncertainty regarding the school's future is a factor comments include concerns regarding the quality of provision and consistency of behaviour management.

Other Local Authorities have also developed their own provision and have indicated that they are not looking to place pupils at Mounton House; e.g. Newport, Blaenau Gwent and South Gloucestershire.

Property services used an agreed existing formula to calculate the costs of the refurbishment to ensure that the site would be suitable for the proposed provision in the original consultation. These formulae are based on published guidance. They provide an appropriate and prudent cost estimation but are not based on a detailed plan.

The original consultation focused upon developing educational provision. The Local Authority is working closely with Social Care via the MYST approach to support children and young people and maintain them in placements closer to home. However, the current provision at Mounton House is very narrow. It

provides for SEBD (Secondary aged boys only). Pupils are being supported via the MYST programme and many of those who are known to Social Care would need a wider range of provision which would provide for girls and boys and meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.

As part of its strategy to meet the needs of pupils with challenging behaviour within the Local Authority, we are investing in each of our secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.

There are further detailed proposals within the body of the cabinet report that highlight how we will meet the current cohort's needs.

In addition, during the consultation process, Senior Officers held consultation meetings with staff of Mounton House special School. A full record of the questions and concerns raised at these sessions is located at appendix 3.

#### **6.4 Specific comments / concerns raised by Governors of Mounton House**

The Council has received some formal responses to this consultation from members of the governing body of Mounton House special School. The below table summarises the key concerns raised:

<b>Record of concerns raised</b>
<p><u>Respondent 1</u></p> <p>1. The proposal to close the school seems to be based on the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) The capital cost of £6.4m to convert the premises to create a mixed age and gender school;</li><li>b) The running costs of the present school with the present funding formula based on places rather than pupil numbers;</li><li>c) The cost per pupil for Monmouthshire being higher than the cost per pupil for pupils from other LA s.</li><li>d) The decline in pupil numbers in the last 5 years.</li></ul> <p>2. The consultation document contains some misrepresentations of the background:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) In school categorisation, there are 4 categories – red/amber/yellow/green. The school is now categorised as 'yellow' which does not represent 'in need of considerable support'!</li></ul>

b) The decline in pupil numbers is entirely due to the admissions policy of Monmouthshire to insist that only pupils with a statement of need for SEBD can be admitted. This is in contrast to the policies being followed by other LA s. The LA has failed to record or report the proportion of applications for admission which have been declined. In the last 2 years, there have been 37 applications for admission to the school which have been refused by the Admissions Panel because the student had a statement for ASD and not SEBD.

c) The consultation document argues that Monmouthshire is effectively subsidising the placement of pupils from other LA's because of the decline in student numbers and the funding arrangement of reserved places. The decline in numbers as explained above, is due to the failure of the LA to change the designation of the school to enable the admission of students with needs other than SEBD. The fee charged to other LA s for pupils at Mounton House is determined by Monmouthshire; if it is too low then it is the LA who is to blame!

d) It should be noted that the majority of special schools in England are private fee paying schools. Why is an LA Special School unable to thrive when there seems to be demand for this type of provision?

e) The consultation document fails to record the provision of an 'outreach' support service being provided by the staff of Mounton House to other secondary schools in Monmouthshire who are seeking to cope with challenging behaviour and adapt to the new procedures required by the Welsh Government with regard to Individual Development Plans for each child.

3. The consultation document makes vague suggestions as to what provision will be made for pupils when the school closes. The reality is that there seems to be no clear plans as to how.when.where provision will be made. There is a reference to units in secondary/primary schools without the recognition that if the pupils are on the roll of these schools, there is the distinct possibility of the pupils being excluded if and when their conduct is deemed too challenging. The LA will then have the need to make provision for these pupils. There is a risk that the students could be subjected to a revolving door education service with moves from one school to another to another. For students at the extremes of need, that would not be a good education!

4. The consultation document infers that pupils who have been excluded can be enrolled with the Pupil Referral Service. Does the regulatory framework allow pupils to be enrolled with the PRS on a long term basis?

5. The consultation document refers to the use of Headlands School in Penarth as an alternative arrangement and yet also refers to the preference for pupils to be educated within their own community! The travel time from Monmouthshire to Penarth is possibly longer than the journey time to Chepstow!

6. The consultation document refers to the use of a private school in Monmouth for the placement of pupils. The question that raises is why is a private school able to thrive and a LA maintained school is not able to!

7. The consultation document is correct to state that the present situation cannot be allowed to continue. Alternatives to closure should have been considered:

a) Redesignate the school as providing education for students with a wider range of Additional Learning Needs and for both genders and a wider age range. This would facilitate a change of the outdated Admissions Policy so that admissions are based on the ability of the school to cater for the needs of the individual pupil;. In other words, an Admissions Policy which starts with premise of 'yes' to applications with a 'but' where the admission would require new resources. Where the 'but..' may incur additional costs, that could be included in the proposed charge to the relevant LA

b) Change the funding formula to reduce the reserved places to match the predicted number of students from Monmouthshire. The fee charged for students from other LA's would be based on assessment of the costs of meeting the needs of that particular student.

c) Review the capital costs associated with adapting the premises to cater for girls and boys on the basis of what can be done within a capital budget of £2m. The changes should be introduced on a phased basis.

d) Create a link to Social Services Department for the provision of respite care for young people which would assist in the funding of the school.

Conclusion From media reports and information within the education sector, special schools in other LA s are catering for an increasing number of pupils with a diverse range of needs. The consultation document does seem to acknowledge the growing need and yet Monmouthshire is proposing to close its' facility. Is this a case of short term thinking with longer term consequences?

### **Local Authority Response**

The Governing Body is correct to identify that the £6.4m cost to re-provide the provision at Mounton House School is prohibitive.

The ability of the school to support its pupils with a staff body commensurate with funding on a per capita basis is questionable. The school has been funded to its capacity until the 2019/20 financial year and once previously in preparation for the 2016/17 financial year when an element of funding was withdrawn.

The Council strives to find a balance of charging placing authorities at a level that covers the cost of the placement and the average placement in the market for a similar placement. Over the recent past, the recoupment level has increased steadily over the last three years putting the cost of a day place in the middle range compared to similar provisions in other local areas.

With regards to the apparent misrepresentations contained within the consultation report:

Concerning admissions and admissions policy, Mounton House staff have always attended the admission panel and take an active part in panel decisions regarding

admissions. The Authority have also supported the school where they do not believe that they have the ability to meet a student's needs or that they pose a potential risk to the wider student body.

Pupils with ASD have not been considered for admission given the schools designation with Welsh Government and skill set of staff within the school.

As stated above the Authority seeks to achieve a recoupment charge that is appropriate. The full cost recovery of places in the school would prohibit placements from other local authorities.

The comparison with independent schools in England is not valid as we are in the Welsh market. The demand for the provision has simply not been seen in the recent past.

The 'outreach' provision identified by the Governing Body has been in place only for the later part of the past year. The recent work with Chepstow School was arranged bilaterally between the schools and the Local Authority has not been party to the cost or any evaluation of the impact of this intervention.

The Cabinet Paper that accompanies this consultation report sets out the provision for all pupils in the school. This document (the Consultation Report) also sets out the aims and objectives of the education service in Monmouthshire.

Monmouthshire works closely with all of our secondary schools and its Pupil Referral Service to ensure that pupils are effectively placed and can access a meaningful education. The Authority remains unconvinced that the management of behaviour in the mainstream within Monmouthshire requires a SEBD Special School. The number of referrals to Mounton House from MCC schools over the past period is very low and the number of children in Monmouthshire who attend Mounton House is also low (seven at the start of the 2019-2020 academic year).

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Referrals	38	24	29	37	19
Monmouthshire Referrals	2	2	2	5	3

The Monmouthshire PRU / PRS is a service specifically designed for pupils at risk of exclusion in Key Stage 4 (years 10 and 11). The recent expansion to support schools via a PRS 'in-reach' service is designed to ensure that pupils do not require longer-term removal from a mainstream setting.

Travel to school distances and times will always be challenging in a County such as Monmouthshire. The authority recognises that the distance to Headlands is a challenge however; its designation allows the school to support children with the dual diagnosis of ASD and SEBD. For that reason and despite its distance, it is the most suitable setting.

Similarly, the consultation document identifies the Tallocher School as an alternative provision. The school is able to admit boys and girls of the full age range and again this range in its designation makes it a suitable placement.

The Governing Body's response rightly recognises that the status quo is not a sustainable solution. The proposals for alternative provision would require significant capital investment. These capital costs (c. £6.4m) were established following work by property professionals and recognise the need for extensive works on the school to take place to ensure that it is a school fit for the most vulnerable learners.

The school would require re-designation to expand its ability to accept girls and pupils of primary school age. The proportion of statemented children in Monmouthshire presenting with SEBD needs is now only 13% of the population. In any configuration, Mounton House would not necessarily be the most appropriate provision for all of those pupils.

The Authority agrees that multi-agency services such as MYST are the most effective means of supporting the most vulnerable young people. There is not professional agreement that the type of residential setting that Mounton House offers is in line with that required by those most complex cases that children's social services are supporting.

#### Response 2

Creation of Inclusion Centres in each of the four Secondary Schools, expertise of SEBD by staff is required for this to be successful. Hub idea seems too fragmented perhaps? Will they work? Who will run these? How will they be run? Training costs for staff to develop the skills required to teach those with SEBD? There has always been a history of those students with SEB who simply cannot maintain mainstream schooling / site. The SEBD Unit in Chepstow Comprehensive School, which was close many years ago, catered for the whole of Monmouthshire. Even then, the mainstream site and inclusion into lessons was inappropriate for some. The curriculum and bespoke packages provided by the excellent staff in Mounton House have been the making of many, many students who would have otherwise failed. It has been an excellent experience for those who have attended. Out of county places are expensive. Why not maintain Mounton House and stop sending students out of county? Surely, if it closes, then more will be sent out of County? 16 students sent out of County, are these KS2 and girls? There is a lot of on-site spare capacity which could be utilised. The original proposed ideas of phased provision for KS 3 / 4 girls and subsequently KS2 and for those having a broader range of additional needs is an excellent proposal. The expertise is already there. Why were the original proposals shelved? It is stated that fixed term and permanent exclusions have increased. Why then close Mounton House? Why are the numbers on roll falling? Is it due to the Admission procedure? Is it necessary for a student to have a Statement? How many students have been declined a placement in Mounton House? Estyn – Mounton House has improved greatly. New delivery model. What is this? What are the options of delivering an alternative provision? There will always be a need for a Mounton House School as there will always be those students who simply cannot access mainstream education. What will happen to those students? Has the LEA a clear vision? Why are Headlands school and the private school in



Monmouth being accessed? Special Schools in England are definitely on the increase, according to the media.

### **Local Authority Response**

The Inclusion Centers will provide outreach support, managed by the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), to deliver school based interventions to pupils displaying challenging behaviour. The nature of support will be agreed between the PRU Co-ordinator and the school designated Wellbeing Lead. This provision will be part of a graduated response and complement school based strategies with the aim of enhancing pupil's self-regulation to enable them to maintain their school placement. Staff in the PRU are experienced and skilled in effectively supporting pupils presenting with challenging behaviour and have established strong strategic partnerships between the PRS and local schools and colleges that enable pupils to access courses and specialist teaching facilities elsewhere in the community. This will allow for the provision of bespoke packages to deliver a broad and appropriate curriculum.

The Local Authority agrees that specialist provision is required to cater for the following:-

- girls and boys,
- a wider age range of pupils
- to meet the identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which includes ASD.

As ASD is the largest single diagnosis of ALN in Monmouthshire and it is also the fastest growing. Consequently, the Local Authority need to reflect this in its provision and ensure that staff have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.

The school would require re-designation to expand its ability to accept girls and pupils of primary school age and formal changes to the school designation require statutory consultation. Whilst the grounds are exceptional, areas of the current building require significant investment to bring it up to both current building standards and health and safety regulations.

The proportion of primary and secondary fixed term exclusions shows an increasing trend over the past 5 years. The number of permanent exclusions have increased over the same period and particularly in the last three years. Analysis of our exclusion data indicates that more children are presenting with challenging behaviour. Many of these learners have a range of wider additional learning needs that require additional and targeted resourcing to enable them to access education successfully.

Over the last five years the needs of children and young people for whom Local Authorities are seeking provision at Mounton House has increased and as a result, fewer applications meet the designated admission criteria which requires a statement of Special Educational Needs for SEBD. No pupil has been refused where they meet the admission criteria. There have been very few referrals to Mounton House from Monmouthshire schools over the same period. At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of referrals to the PRS because schools are identifying this as a more suitable provision to meet individual needs.

For the very pupils who may need special school provision solely for SEBD, the Local Authority will secure this from other schools or providers.

In addition, during the consultation process, Senior Officers held consultation meetings with governors of Mounon House special School. A full record of the questions / concerns raised at these sessions can be found under appendix 4

#### 6.4 Views of those in favour of proposals

The table below summarises the responses received from those in favour of proposals to close Mounon House Special School:

Summary Comment	LA Response
The provision for pupils across Monmouthshire is unsatisfactory as there is no provision for SEBD for girls and primary age children. The school should close but Monmouthshire must invest in an alternative to benefit all pupils across the county	The Authority agrees with this statement and recognises the need to invest in provision to support all of our children with ALN.
Children and young people should be given the best possible opportunity to be educated within mainstream settings with appropriate levels of support. Current financial pressures do not allow for this.	<p>The Authority agrees that all children should be given the opportunity to progress in a mainstream school with their peers. We are investing in all of our secondary schools to secure a graduated response to challenging behaviour that allows this to happen.</p> <p>The Authority also recognises that finances are challenging in all schools and educational services.</p>
Current provision does not meet the needs of all SEBD learners within Monmouthshire. There needs to be high quality SEBD provision for boys and girls whatever age. However, in closing Mounon House, MCC must ensure all resources, monies, expertise, knowledge and leadership are re-invested into MCC ALN and Inclusion provision to support schools, teachers and learners. The re-investment of all resources should develop a provision that allows learners with identified	The Authority agrees with this statement and recognises the need to invest in provision to support all of our children with ALN.

SEBD to thrive in full time education within an appropriate setting and make a successful transition into adulthood	
The current SEBD provision at Mounton House is only for boys aged 11 - 16. We need SEBD provision that meets the needs of girls and younger pupils.	The Authority agrees with this statement.
It would allow children of all ages to access specialist provision that they desperately need. There are so many children in mainstream schools who do not the necessary support which causes difficulties for them and has a massive effect in other Children in their classes.	The Authority agrees with this statement and recognises the need to invest in provision to support all of our children with ALN.
I feel the school is too expensive to run and that provision can be outsourced at a cheaper price. The alternative to closing is to increase its numbers but it can't continue with so few pupils on roll and the cost per pupil being so high.	The Authority remains committed to its objective to educate as many children as possible as close to their community and in the right provision as is possible. The selection of a placement is based on the needs of the child and in some cases their parent's preference.
The provision needs to be accessible for all ages and both genders. There is inequality currently.	The Authority agrees with this statement.
It is recognised that the Council needs to save money during this time of austerity and therefore support the proposed closure of the school to redeploy staff and financial resources. However, there is a need for clarity that the closure would not negatively impact on mainstream schools.	Unless recommended by the Annual Review process, Monmouthshire is not proposing to move any pupils currently attending Mounton House School to a mainstream provision.

## 6.5 Views of placing Local Authorities

As part of this consultation exercise, the Council contacted neighbouring Authorities to seek their views on the proposals to close Mounton House Special School. Unfortunately, very few neighbouring authorities responded to the consultation within the set timescales.

The views of our neighbouring authorities (particularly those with a history of placing pupils at Mounton House Special School) are imperative to this process and the future of Mounton House Special School. Officers have therefore contacted such authorities since the response closing date to ensure their views on the provision at Mounton House Special School could be incorporated into this report.

A response to this consultation has subsequently been received from the following neighbouring / placing authorities:

Local Authority	Summary response
Blaenau Gwent County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placement of Blaenau Gwent pupils over the last few years have been inconsistent due to uncertainties around the future of the school.</li> <li>• The provision offered at the school over the last few years have also caused concern leading to sourcing placements elsewhere</li> </ul>
Vale of Glamorgan County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A view that Mounton House Special School has previously managed some of the Vale of Glamorgan's most challenging pupils</li> <li>• A view that there are very few placements available in South Wales so such provisions should remain available</li> </ul>
South Gloucestershire County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A view that alternative provision is now available in South Gloucester and therefore there would not be a need to place at Mounton House Special School</li> </ul>
Torfaen County Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A view that Monmouthshire's proposals are sensible given that it doesn't have in county provision for many vulnerable pupils leading to a need to seek out of county placements</li> </ul>

Unfortunately, the Council has been unable to draw from this consultation whether or not there is an appropriate demand for future placements at Mounton House Special School should it remain open.

### 6.6 Views of the Education Achievement Service (EAS)

The EAS support the Local Authority's Option 2 to close Mounton House School and secure alternative provision. EAS supports this option because:

1) It allows the Local Authority to develop more suitable and inclusive provision for the learners in Monmouthshire who are identified with having additional learning needs. It also ensures provision for a wider age range (all key stages) and includes girls.

- 2) It allows learners to attend more local settings rather than having to travel out of county. Spending less time travelling would improve pupils' well-being and enable learners to spend more quality time with their families and in school
- 3) A greater number of learners can remain in school, not only reducing travel time, but enabling them to remain in familiar surroundings and retain already established relationships with their peers and with staff
- 4) The proposed model lends itself to increased collaboration within and between schools, sharing practice and working closely together. This aligns with key aspects of the National Mission and the EAS Business Plan advocating joint working and sharing in order to ensure learners receive the best possible provision.

## 7. ESTYN Response

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The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2018 requires the Council to consult with ESTYN on statutory School Organisational matters. Below is the response received from ESTYN in relation to this consultation concerning the proposed closure of Mounton House Special School:

### **Introduction**

This report has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education and Training in Wales.

Under the terms of the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and its associated Code, proposers are required to send consultation documents to Estyn. However Estyn is not a body which is required to act in accordance with the Code and the Act places no statutory requirements on Estyn in respect of school organisation matters. Therefore as a body being consulted, Estyn will provide their opinion only on the overall merits of school organisation proposals.

Estyn has considered the educational aspects of the proposal and has produced the following response to the information provided by the proposer and other additional information such as data from Welsh Government and the views of the Regional Consortia which deliver school improvement services to the schools within the proposal.

### **Conclusion**

The proposer has presented a suitable case for the closure of Mounton House special school. However, the proposer has not presented well enough exactly how it will continue to meet the needs of those pupils who currently attend this provision. Therefore it is Estyn's view that there is a lack of clarity as to whether the proposals are likely to at least maintain the standard of education provision in the area.

## **Description and benefits**

The proposer has presented a clear rationale for the proposal. It appears to be to address falling rolls, issues of high costs and to review the current provision so that it meets a wider range of children with SEBD and not just secondary school aged boys.

The proposer has outlined the two options that they considered. These are to maintain the status quo or to close the school to allow the proposer an opportunity to develop more appropriate provision. The expected benefits and disadvantages of each option appear to have been suitably considered and the reasons for choosing the preferred option seem to be valid and reasonable. The proposer has also stated that they will fully explore all other available options in developing a new delivery model. However it is not clear enough as to why the proposer cannot consider other available options while the school remains open.

The proposer has identified four risks that are associated with this proposal. It has proposed generally appropriate counter measures to address three of these risks. However, the counter measure for the risk of educational instability for pupils affected does not provide sufficient detail about the alternative arrangements for these pupils.

The proposer commits itself to continue to provide free home to school transport for pupils whose needs are met by the provision. The proposer provides details of numbers on roll, projected numbers and capacities at Mounton House special school and also at schools affected by the proposal. However, it has not provided sufficient analysis of this data to demonstrate how surplus places could be affected by the proposal.

The proposer appears to have considered the impact of the proposals on Welsh medium provision. It considers that the proposal is not directly linked to the WESP but that it would endeavour to appoint suitably experienced Welsh speakers. It also states that the proposal would not expand or reduce Welsh language provision within the local authority.

## **Educational aspects of the proposal**

The proposer has appropriately considered the likely impact of the school closure on education standards, provision and leadership. It makes clear reference to the outcomes of the most recent Estyn inspections, as well as the regional consortium's categorisation of the school. However, it makes no reference to the fact that at the last inspection in 2015, Mounton House special school was placed in the category of requiring significant improvement or that it was removed from this category following an Estyn monitoring visit in November 2017.

The proposer asserts that it will continue to work in partnership with the regional consortium to secure a greater level of support for schools named within the proposal to ensure that the current level for standards, wellbeing and leadership are enhanced following the implementation of the proposal.

The proposer clearly sets out the standards of school performance for Mounton House special school and its closest neighbours over the past three years, where pupils are most likely to go following closure. However, there is insufficient commentary regarding whether educational standards are likely to be maintained following the closure of the school.

The proposer has considered the impact of the proposal on ALN learners. In addition, it has completed an equality impact assessment for pupils with some of the protected characteristics. However, it has not sufficiently considered the impact of the proposal on all the protected characteristics for example, gender reassignment and sexual orientation.

## 7.1 Councils' response to ESTYN

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The Local Authority is grateful for Estyn's response. In relation to meeting the needs of a small number of pupils affected by closure, Monmouthshire will:-

- work with parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.
- Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.

When reviewing pupil's statements, any protected characteristics such as sexual orientation and gender reassignment will be considered (should they arise) as part of the review process.

The Local Authority recognises that the school was placed in the category of requiring significant improvement and that it was removed from this category following an Estyn monitoring visit in November 2017. Since this time, the school has continued to improve the quality of learning experiences through the delivery of bespoke packages and this has led to better outcomes for the pupils. As a result, the school is now categorised as yellow, requiring lower levels of support.

The Local Authority proposes to extend the capacity of the PRU to meet the needs of the pupils who will be in Years 10 and 11 in September 2020. The PRU have established strong strategic partnerships between the PRS and local schools and colleges that enable pupils to access courses and specialist teaching facilities elsewhere in the community. This gives breadth to the curriculum and enriches pupils' learning experiences as identified in the most recent Estyn Inspection April 2018. Given the range of expertise and experience in the PRU, the Local Authority is confident that the standard of education for this group of learners will be maintained.

For younger pupils (Key Stage 3 as of September 2020) who would still require access to specialist SEBD provision, the Local Authority will liaise with placing



authorities to secure suitable, high quality placements from alternative special schools or providers.

## 8. General overview and consensus

The consultation process undertaken proved to be without doubt a useful exercise, providing a full and open opportunity to test and critique the proposal concerning the future of Mounton House Special School.

The summary of responses under section 6 of this report show clear support against the Council's proposals to close Mounton House Special School. However, an analysis of the feedback received from the consultation has enabled us to draw four key themes as to why consultees may not be in favour of the proposals:

Theme 1	Local Authority mitigating response
<p>A concern that the children and young people will not cope in mainstream education, and that the education of those already in mainstream will be disrupted.</p>	<p>The Council has confirmed through this report that the children on roll at Mounton House Special school will not be returned to mainstream education should the proposals to close the school proceed.</p> <p>The children and young people concerned are in receipt of a statement of special educational needs which determines the specialist provision required to meet individual needs. This may, or may not, be delivered in a special school. The annual review of a statement will continue to determine the type of provision required, including the support needed to ensure that the child or young person can participate in education successfully.</p>

Theme 2	Local Authority Response
<p>A concern that there is no other alternative provision that is suitable for the children and young people at the school</p>	<p>Should proposals to close Mounton House Special School proceed, Monmouthshire will work with the relevant Local Authorities, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p> <p>Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make</p>



	<p>recommendations for alternative provision.</p> <p>For those attending KS4 provision (year 10 and 11 from September 2020), the Council proposes to maintain local provision supported by the Pupil Referral Service to ensure any disruption to children and young people is minimised at this critical time. However, this is not a mandatory provision and parents / children concerned will be consulted on options for future provision should proposals proceed.</p>
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Theme 3	Local Authority Response
<p>A view that the council needs to maintain special provision due to a growing demand for appropriate support for children with additional needs</p>	<p>The consultation on the closure of Mounton House Special School has been brought forward through an ongoing review of provision for ALN and Inclusion services across the County. This review has identified that the provision currently offered at Mounton House Special School is meeting the needs of only a very small number of Monmouthshire learners. At the same time, we are using a greater number of placements in out of County settings due to overcome the lack of local provision In a period of challenging resources the Local Authority needs to be able to draw upon its full resource to support its full range of children with ALN.</p> <p>The proposals to close Mounton House would not be implemented to bring forward financial savings, but to reinvest in provision that meets a wider range of needs; this would include those with SEBD as well as the full range of other needs such as ASD.</p>

Theme 4	Local Authority Response
<p>A view that the Council should invest in Mounton House Special school to develop a provision that meets the future needs of our community</p>	<p>In 2018, the Council consulted on extending the provision at Mounton House Special School to meet a wider range of additional needs. The</p>

	<p>proposal included providing provision for both boys and girls and the full age range.</p> <p>Cabinet did not progress the development of an overarching special school following the previous consultation exercise. There were two reasons for this: the management structure of the proposed new special school. The consultation <i>'highlighted a significant level of concern from some consultees towards the proposals to place the management of the SNRB centres with the new special school. The concerns focussed around governance arrangements, responsibilities and a risk of causing segregation of our children and young people on these sites.'</i></p> <p>Secondly, the feasibility works undertaken identified that the site / building would require significant investment (circa £6.4 million) to enable the implementation of this proposal. Therefore, this option was not taken forward through the political process. It was agreed that this would be recast and this is the subsequent consultation.</p>
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Through analysis of the feedback received during the consultation period, the Council is able to draw some clear recognition from consultees that the provision offered at Mounton House Special School in its current form is only meeting the needs of a small number of Monmouthshire learners and is therefore unsustainable without redevelopment on the site.

In recognition of the significant investment required to develop the Mounton House site and buildings to provide a provision that meets the growing needs of learners across the county, the recommendation is to move forward and publish the proposal to close Mounton House Special School. The proposals will allow the Council to reinvest the funds into an alternative model that meets a wider range of need, including provision of services for those with ASD and SEBD for both boys and girls of Primary and Secondary age.

## Appendix 1 - List of Consultees with whom we consulted

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- Parents, Guardians and carers of all pupils at schools directly affected by the proposal
- Headteacher, staff and governors of schools directly affected by the proposal.
- Out of county Schools affected by the proposal.
- Pupils/Pupil Councils of schools directly affected by the proposal
- Headteachers of all schools in MCC area
- All MCC Members
- Welsh Ministers
- All MCC Town and Community Councils
- All MCC Assembly Members representing the area served by the school
- All Members of Parliament representing MCC area
- Directors of Education of all bordering LAs – Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Powys, Torfaen, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire
- Directors of Education of affected LA's – Caerphilly, South Gloucestershire, Merthyr, Bristol, Rhonda Cynon Taff, North Somerset, Somerset, Swindon, Vale of Glamorgan, Cardiff
- Principals of Coleg Gwent
- MCC Youth Service
- GAVO
- Monmouthshire Governors Association
- Teaching Associations
- Support Staff Associations
- Policy Officer (Equalities & Welsh Language)
- Welsh Government
- ESTYN
- Church in Wales Diocesan Trust, Director of Education
- Roman Catholic Diocesan Trust, Director of Education
- South East Wales Education Achievement Service
- Gwent Police and Crime Commissioner
- SNAP Cymru Parent Partnership Service
- Local Health Board

### **Mounton House Special School Pupil Consultation 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

The pupil consultation meeting took place on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at Mounton House Special School. The meeting was facilitated by Jacquelyn Elias (Principal Officer Additional Learning Needs, Monmouthshire County Council), Natasha Liles (Senior Schools Admission Officer, Monmouthshire County Council) and Mr Kieran Dash (Assistant Head Teacher and ALNCO, Mounton House Special School).

A representative group of pupils met to discuss the consultation document and to ask the Local Authority representatives questions. Some pupils were confident to meet as a group other pupils preferred to meet on an individual basis or in pairs. Participating pupils were given a copy of an accessible version of the consultation document and a response sheet (Appendix A). Copies of these documents were left at the school so that all pupils could have a chance to respond to the consultation. These documents were also emailed to the Head Teacher. One young man provided a typed response, which is included at the end of this report.

There was no formal structure to the meeting and the boys were given opportunities to speak freely and ask questions. The following represents the main topics discussed.

#### **1. Is Mounton House going to close?**

JE explained to the children and young people that no final decision had been made yet. JE told the children and young people that this was their chance to tell Monmouthshire County Council what they thought about the proposal to close Mounton House. JE said that their views and the views of everyone that responded to the consultation would be included in a report that would go to a Council meeting in June. It would be at this meeting that a decision would be made.

#### **2. What is important about Mounton House School?**

##### **Pupil Responses**

All the pupils spoke very positively about the staff

- 'In Mounton House you get more help and support. They understand you, if you kick off you don't get dumped to the floor.'
- 'Staff go out of their way to help children - Mr Dash does three jobs!'
- 'This is my seventh school. It is the best school I've been to. Teachers spend more time with me. I get to know the teachers. Other teachers don't treat you like they do in here.'
- 'In Mounton House if you fight, staff give you the opportunity to tell the whole story, to say what has happened'

Pupils expressed concern about the number of staff who may leave or who are leaving Mounton House because it may close. One pupil said that the most important thing about Mounton House was ‘the staff...if staff leave that will change the school’

## **2 What makes Mounton House different to the other schools the boys had attended?**

### **Pupil Responses**

- ‘It’s different -good. I’ve got more of an opportunity to get an education here.’
- ‘In mainstream I had problems following the rules, I have a temper. Here I don’t get angry so much’
- ‘Friends are important here - you have friendship groups’
- ‘Children make progress here - we can do things that help us get into college like BTec. In mainstream I wouldn’t have got anything’.
- ‘Smaller classes help - when there are less people. Any more than four for me causes problems’
- You get to do things like getting qualifications for things like painting and decorating and plumbing’
- We have a chance to do things outside like forest schools - I like go-karting’
- We have a therapy dog called Nancy who comes in to help us - she makes us feel calm’

The boys talked about the Reflexology they have access to on a Monday or Friday. They all said they really liked this and said it made a difference to how they felt.

## **3. Is there anything that needs changing or that Mounton House could do differently?**

### **Pupil Responses**

- ‘Things need to change but you’re going about it the wrong way’
- The building is dangerous, it needs work’
- ‘Access to the roof is too easy’
- ‘There needs to be more children here - we need more pupils’
- ‘It would be good if Mounton House staff could help other kids in mainstream who are having problems’
- ‘Could other kids from other comps access this place?’
- There needs to be more facilities like play areas’.

## **4. Other Comments**

- Year 10 pupils said it was really important that they would get the chance to finish year 11 as they would be doing courses other schools couldn’t provide like BTecs
- A Year 11 pupil said that he would have like to stay in Mounton House after he was 16 - he felt he needed more time in a place he felt safe before he went to college.

- Some pupils thought the school should include younger (primary) pupils but others thought that younger children should be kept separate.
- Some pupils were happy that the school was for boys only but another pupil thought that it would be better to have girls at the school.
- One pupil said that he thought the land would be sold. He said he had looked into this and if the farmer who lives next to the school sold some land, there would be access to the school site. JE said that selling the land the school was on was not something the Local Authority was considering.
- Most pupils asked what would happen to them if the school closed. They were concerned that they would be put back into mainstream schools and that this would not be a good thing for them. One pupil felt that putting Mounton House children back into mainstream classes would not be good for mainstream children. JE said that she could not tell them now which school they would go to, as she would need to meet with them and their families to discuss what kind of school would meet their needs. Should Mounton House School close, it would be very important to make sure that any new school would be right for them.

### **Individual Pupil Response to Consultation by Pupil I**

I think that MHS is a positive environment for young boys who have attended it in the past and present, yes I have seen some boys get chucked out for bad behaviour but I have also seen many people turn their lives around while in Mounton house.

The staff in Mounton House are mostly caring, loving people who are trying to help the kids get a better future by getting us qualifications. A majority of them treat us like family, even the care takers are nice and friendly.

The facilities at Mounton house school try and cater for us as best they can, we have a gym, reflexology, games and sports room and a sensory room, pool room. They also have a wide range of BTec and outdoor education courses.

How I feel about MHS compared to mainstream schools, I have been in many mainstream schools and got excluded from them. So when I came to MHS I was happy to find out they cater for many different boys.

I don't think many of the boys would last in mainstream. If I was younger and away from this school I would refuse to attend and sit on my Xbox at home.

The kids in mainstream would miss out on learning opportunities, it would be a bad opportunity for the kids at MHS who have already been kicked out of mainstream.

## Appendix 3 - Consultation session with staff of Mounton House Special School

### **MOUNTON HOUSE CONSULTATION MEETING WITH STAFF 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019 @ 3.30PM**

25 Attendees (Staff) Jacqueline Elias, Will McLean, Jill Thomas, Matthew Jones, Nikki Wellington

Claire Young & Wendy Edwards (Note Takers)

**Head Teacher** Opens Meeting and states that pupils have been unsettled since news. States that there are no new answers, in the same position as last year.

Summary of comment / question	LA Response
<p><b>HT</b> Stated that she had attended the Select Committee last week and was pleased that it was a democratic process. Stated that staff are concerned for jobs but more concerned about the young people. <b>HT</b> stated that she was shocked by only 2 choices being discussed at the Select Committee when there was 4 options on the Cabinet paper. Stated councillors would go for Option 3 and she agreed that Mounton House is not successful in current format and needs to have wider admissions.</p>	<p>Mounton House only provides education for a small number of Monmouthshire secondary aged boys on roll (7 in September 2019). There is no provision for primary aged pupils or girls within the Local Authority or for younger children.</p> <p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD</p>
<p>Concerned no ASD provision in Monmouthshire &amp; children have to go out of county which is a large cost, when staff at Mounton House can meet needs of ASD and have done so in the past, and gives an example of a child at Mounton House with ASD whose needs were met.</p>	<p>The Local authority would agree that provision needs to be developed for children / young people with ASD within a whole authority ASD strategy. However, this is not the current designation of Mounton House and as such it is not fit for purpose to meet the needs of Monmouthshire pupils with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>States a review was supposed to have been done in 2013 and it wasn't and it could have improved numbers if had been done.</p>	<p>The Local Authority reviewed ALN provision following the Estyn inspection in 2012 to address concerns identified.</p>
<p>Wants clarity on what is going to happen to current Yr 11 if Mounton</p>	<p>The Local Authority has considered the impact of closure on existing pupils and</p>

<p>House closes? States can't just have 2 members of staff teaching them.</p>	<p>details elsewhere in this report how it proposes to meet the needs of them going forward.</p> <p>The local authority recognises the work and dedication of the current staff however, the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>When are they going to get pupils views as not spoken to officially? As concerned that pupils views won't be taken into the consultation as they won't be in over Easter, when the consultation closes?</p>	<p>There was a pupil engagement session on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019. This took place after the consultation had closed because of the dates of school holidays but has been included in the consultation report.</p>
<p>Concerned how vulnerable the boys are and that they had to find out on the Friday before the half term, via the news and not by an official from Monmouthshire Council.</p>	<p>Monmouthshire work with the LA, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision.</p> <p>The deferral of the potential closure date to August 2020 negated the necessity to tell the students about any next steps.</p>
<p>Have Monmouthshire taken into account new ALN bill in 2020 where statements will be no longer? Staff states that closure of Mounton House will result in children being sent out of county which goes against legislation of keeping children close.</p>	<p>Monmouthshire will work with the LA, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p> <p>Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision. This is in line with the new Act.</p>
<p>Why hasn't the option of taking girls in at Mounton House been looked at? As empty rooms upstairs which could be used.</p>	<p>The Local Authority agrees that specialist provision is required to cater for the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ girls and boys,</li> <li>○ a wider age range of pupils</li> </ul> <p>to meet the identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which would include ASD.</p>
<p>Why do we need significant capital to have girls on site? As have had them on site before?</p>	<p>Other services such as PRS also offers vocational courses for both boys and girls. Whilst the grounds are exceptional, areas of the current building require significant investment to</p>



	bring it up to both current building and health and safety regulations.
<b>Head</b> Concerned nobody has seen plans or proposals of the 6.4 million expenditure? Last year it was stated that the school could be refurbished with £2 million. What does the 6.4 million proposal look like? What could we achieve with the 2 million?	Whilst the grounds are exceptional, areas of the current building require significant investment to bring it up to both current building and health and safety regulations.
Questions new consultation paper, questions admission figures, as they are ever changing and that there are a lot more options available than stated in paper. One being that Mounton House could admit non statemented boys and take a wider age ranges.	The Local Authority agrees that provision needs to be developed. However formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.
<b>HT</b> Concerned that Mounton House Panel only accept statemented children. JE responded. <b>HT</b> states that one of the focus points needs to be on admission criteria, as 37 children were refused in the last 3 years because they weren't statemented.	The Local Authority agrees that provision needs to be developed. However formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.
Staff question and state who is on panel as they don't know.	Mounton House staff have always attended the admission panel and have taken an active part in panel decisions regarding admissions.
Asks if cost stated by <b>WM</b> reflects transport cost?	<p>Monmouthshire is a rural Local Authority and many children travel some distance to their schools. An analysis of travelling distances to proposed new provisions post 2020 indicates that additional travel costs would be limited to two pupils.</p> <p>The Authority completed a mileage assessment to Headleands / Talocher and only 2 pupils would be required to travel significantly further.</p> <p>In this assessment, we have only looked at KS3 as alternative provision is proposed for KS4.</p>

<p><b>Staff</b> states that price at Mounton House includes therapies as other provisions don't.</p> <p><b>HT</b> comments that Talocher differentiate placement costs and therapy cost but Mounton House don't.</p>	<p>Applications for pupils requiring therapeutic provision have been declined as Mounton House does not offer therapeutic input.</p> <p>Mounton House Special School does not provide recognised clinical therapies but does provide access to some treatments for the students.</p>
<p><b>Staff</b> member stated that <b>WM's</b> comment "it's more costly to have children at Mounton House than it is out of county", is a mock statement.</p>	<p>Statement of opinion</p>
<p><b>Staff</b> Need to know who is on panel, as admission process hasn't changed. <b>JE responded.</b> <b>Staff</b> state they don't know who is on panel and that the 2013 consultation should have changed the admission criteria to stop this from happening.</p>	<p>Mounton House staff have always attended the admission panel and have taken an active part in panel decisions regarding admissions. The representatives on the panel are determined by the school.</p>
<p><b>HT</b> states that the building does need knocking down and rebuilding, but it's not about the building as it's the practice inside the building that counts.</p>	<p>The Local Authority agrees that provision needs to be developed. However formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p>
<p><b>Staff</b> States not about money, as per a previous EAS paper but about what goes on inside. <b>JE agrees</b> and <b>WM states</b> as part of the Consultation, the other 4 Local Authorities will feed back as to what they need to place pupils at Mounton House. <b>Staff</b> ask, will this be shared with staff, <b>WM confirms</b> it will.</p>	<p>Responses from other Local Authorities are included as part of this paper</p>
<p><b>Staff</b> State they don't want to debate, they just want to be heard and they are not working against the Local Authority.</p>	<p>Statement</p>
<p><b>Staff</b> State how will mainstream staff cater for BESD kids as they can't cope, as expertise for this is at Mounton House. If Mounton House closes how</p>	<p>The local authority recognises the work of the current staff and noted the work undertaken following the last Estyn Inspection report when teaching was rated as adequate. However, the</p>

<p>does Monmouth propose to meet the needs of BESD kids?</p>	<p>provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.</p>
<p>If decision is black &amp; white, this is making staff worried about their jobs and forcing them to look for other positions and they are concerned that Mounon House will lose experienced, expertise because of the consultation.</p>	<p>The original proposal in the initial consultation was to change the role and function of Mounon. To secure this proposal the process that needed to have been followed would have been closure of the existing Special School and re-opening a new Special School which could cater for a wider range of identified need.</p> <p>Even with the initial proposal, The Local Authority recognised the skills and experience of the current staff were restricted to secondary aged boys with SEBD and the Local Authority would have required staff with the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.</p>
<p><u>HT</u> How do you plan to use staff expertise at Mounon House, going forward in a new provision?</p>	<p>The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier intervention for schools and pupils. This will be delivered by staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour.</p>
<p><u>HT</u> States skills of the team &amp; Outreach at Mounon House is better than in a mainstream school. States it's hard to talk about this without getting emotional. Gives an example of a pupil and the team and the environment at Mounon House, which all combined had a positive result on the child which wouldn't have happened in any other environment, such as a mainstream setting. Where the pupil required 2 staff to support them, due to needing a face change every 20 minutes.</p>	<p>The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier intervention for schools and pupils. This will be delivered by staff experienced in managing challenging behaviour.</p>
<p><u>HT</u> States that in recent documents there are 130 people in Monmouth identified with ASD/SEBD with statements, and questions why aren't Mounon House staff being able to make</p>	<p>The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier, local intervention for schools and pupils.</p>

<p>an impact on this? States more flexibility needs to be created so that staff at Mounon House can offer their expertise.</p>	<p>ALN data shows that pupils with ASD are the largest identified group of pupils with statements of special educational need in Monmouthshire. These pupils can also present with challenging behaviour associated with their condition. The local authority recognises the need to further develop provision, which includes this group of pupils.</p>
<p><b>Staff</b> States SEBD/ALN is growing worldwide. Asks why someone at county hall couldn't have monitored &amp; saw the levels drop at Mounon House and flag this up sooner?</p>	<p>As above</p>
<p>States since the announcement of closure, interest in Mounon House has increased, as 5 other authorities have made new referrals.</p>	<p>Responses from neighbouring authorities are included in this documentation.</p>
<p>Asks why aren't Monmouthshire pupils charged less? Curious as to how Monmouthshire costs fair to other Local Authorities.</p>	<p>Costs in Monmouthshire are comparable and remain in the middle range in relation to other other similar provisions.</p>
<p>Asks why wasn't Mounon House considered for the regeneration/investment programme (21<sup>st</sup> century schools funding)?</p>	<p>Whilst the grounds are exceptional, areas of the current building require significant investment to bring it up to both current building and health and safety regulations.</p>

Appendix 4 - Consultation session with Governors of Mounton House Special School

**MOUNTON HOUSE CONSULTATION WITH GOVERNORS 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019 @ 4.45PM**

4 Governors & Head Teacher, Jacqueline Elias, Will McClean, Jill Thomas, Nikki Wellington, Matthew Jones

Apologies from Governors Gareth, Carol & Emma.

Claire Young & Wendy Edwards (Note Takers)

Head Teacher does Introductions

Summary comment / question	LA Response
<p><b>HT</b> Raises question governors asked her about consultation on re-designation of catchment. All schools were asked to send that out to parent/carers. Why were they not asked to send this consultation to all parents?</p>	<p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority follow the consultation requirements in full. This is not a re-designation of catchment.</p>
<p><b>HT</b> states if any other parent/carer wants to complete consultation they can do so on line on the Monmouthshire website.</p>	<p>Comment</p>
<p><b>Governor</b> states doesn't want to go over what has been discussed in previous meeting with staff.</p> <p><b>HT</b> states staff are concerned about pupils if school closes.</p>	<p>Monmouthshire will work with the LA, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p> <p>Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.</p>
<p>concerned over placing pupils in Yr11 back in mainstream especially given the proposed closure date of December, as that is in the middle of exams and they will be affected greatly as they won't engage in mainstream. Also concerned that Yr10 will lose time whilst they integrate and cannot foresee that pupils will settle into a new setting.</p>	<p>The local authority has recognised that closing in December would not be in pupil's best interests and has extended the proposed date of closure to July 2020 to enable year 11 pupils to complete their formal education at Mounton House.</p> <p>For the small number of pupils affected by the proposed closure then Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make</p>

	recommendations for alternative provision.
<b>HT</b> States one of the strengths at Mounon House is working hard at building relationships. States that this consultation is a trauma for them and the pupils are going through trauma. They are devastated that their school might close and it has been extremely hard to engage them since the announcement. States they are not coping well. Staff are not talking about their jobs, they are talking about the pupils.	The local authority recognises the work of the current staff and noted the work undertaken following the last Estyn Inspection report when teaching was rated as adequate. However, the provision remains limited to secondary aged boys and does not meet the needs of children and young people with complex neurodevelopmental needs.
<b>Governor</b> States doesn't understand why Mounon House panel hasn't accepted more children and not changed the criteria? <b>HT</b> and another <b>Governor</b> stated not aware that the panel could change admission criteria.	The Local Authority agrees that provision needs to be developed. However formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority would require staff who have the appropriate specialist skills and qualifications to meet the needs of children and young people with neurodevelopmental disorders, including ASD.
<b>Governor</b> States Mounon House is in the best place it's been in 10 years he's been here, especially with Estyn report. Doesn't understand why Mounon House can't take kids that mainstream schools are struggling with	As above
<b>Governor</b> States that there seems to be a lot of kids out there that Mounon House could help but are not.	As above
<b>Governor</b> States that its always been about driving numbers up, however the statementing criteria is stopping this because statementing is taking too long. <b>HT</b> states that she wishes she had questioned the panel before, but never thought they would be in this position.	Monmouthshire Local Authority require pupils who attend specialist provision to have a statement to ensure that the graduated response has been followed by schools and that pupils are appropriately placed.
<b>HT</b> States they have increased their Outreach work and done lots to be creative, and would like to do more at primary. <b>Governor</b> states that they feel they have not been allowed to be as creative as they wanted to be.	Unless recommended by the Annual Review, Monmouthshire LA is not proposing to place pupils in mainstream provision. The local authority is investing in each of its secondary schools to provide earlier intervention for schools and pupils.



<p><b>HT</b> States it's unfair to be rung in August asking for a member of staff for Outreach programme. Stated their Duke of Edinburgh programme was good. <b>HT</b> states she believes that they should be more flexible and that the admission criteria needs changing.</p>	<p>Formal changes to the school designation requires statutory consultation and the local authority follow the consultation requirements in full.</p>
<p><b>Governor</b> States that he is sad that Mounon House have already lost 2 teachers because of this consultation and fears that there will be more by the end of it. Gives example of maths teacher leaving who has had excellent results at Mounon House.</p>	<p>Statement</p>
<p><b>Governor</b> States that he doesn't understand why Mounon House is not being promoted across the bridge? Asks why girls can't be brought in as it wouldn't cost a lot. Also questioned why Primary Children couldn't be brought in, as Mounon House can cater for primary, which has been proven by their Out Reach service that is being done in Primary schools. Also questions why Mounon House is not offered out to Bristol &amp; Birmingham?</p>	<p>The Local Authority agrees that specialist provision is required to cater for both genders a wider age range of pupils and to meet the identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which would include ASD.</p>
<p><b>HT</b> Says that <b>WM's response</b> of "the school has not been stopped from marketing the school", is correct, but because of ALN reform they haven't been able to do so.</p>	<p>Statement – I don't understand why the Act would limit this?</p>
<p><b>Governor</b> feels some aspects of the school are unfairly represented in consultation document. Especially their yellow categorisation. <b>HT</b> explains further that in the consultation document that it didn't explain the yellow categorisation properly, and as it stated that the school still needs significant work.</p>	<p>Schools are categorised on the level of support they need to continue along the improvement journey.</p> <p>Welsh Government determines the criteria and Regional consortia are responsible for managing the categorisation process</p>
<p><b>Governor Questions</b> How the site might be used in future? And states that the plan as to how that might be, would've been useful to have been produced alongside the closure consultation documents and could stop staff leaving. It could've also reduced the pain it's caused and the failure to talk about what could happen has put losing staff at greater risk</p>	<p>The LA will work with , parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p> <p>Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.</p>

The site cannot be used for residential use.



Appendix 5 - Consultation session with Parents and interested parties

**MOUNTON HOUSE CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2019 @ 17.40PM**

15 Attendees (6 sets of parents as advised by Head Teacher)

Jacqueline Elias, Will McClean, Nikki Wellington and Matthew Jones

Claire Young & Wendy Edwards (Note Takers)

Summary comment / question	LA Response
Was told last year that it was cheaper to keep children in county than to send out of county? So where are the children going to go? Also questioned the upgrade costs last year?	The LA will work with , parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.  Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.
someone didn't do their job right and staff and boys at Mounon House have been treated badly and was disgusted by this.	Statement
So where will the boys go?	The LA will work with , parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.  Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.
What happens to non-Monmouthshire children? stated doesn't want her grandson (who is in Yr8) to go anywhere else as Mounon House is the best setting for him.	Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.
States that their child is a Torfaen pupil, and concerned about changing provision to local provision.	As above
Asks what work has been done at looking at a regional service? What are the other LA's doing to look at providing the same service, as Mounon House, in their area?	Other Local Authorities have also developed their own provision to meet local needs

<p>Asks why aren't other authorities placing kids at Mounton House?</p>	<p>Responses from neighbouring authorities are included in this documentation. Whilst the uncertainty regarding the school's future is a factor comments include concerns regarding the quality of provision and consistency of behaviour management.</p>
<p>States on consultation document there is no social care agencies?</p>	<p>Statement</p>
<p>Said her son's case worker didn't know what was going on at Mounton House, and the closure consultation. His case worker found out via a newspaper article. Her son is in Yr10 and is having a major break down as he is worried about what could happen. He wants to be a Teaching Assistant but is worried that he won't be able to.</p>	<p>The LA will work with LA, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p>
<p>Parent states that she has struggled to be listened to for years over concerns over her son. Since being at Mounton House he has done really well and cannot be placed back into mainstream school. (Parent became very upset) Stated that she is very worried about her family being ripped apart and stated that her son has made so many positive relationships with staff in school. Not thinking about the child, just money and not thinking about the families that will be effected. Her son is in Yr8/9 and is called Liam. States you just have to meet him to see what the school has done for him. He was suicidal before coming to Mounton House. He now feels he's found a place where he fits. Parent states that son has melt downs multiple times a day because of this consultation.</p>	<p>Monmouthshire will work with the LA, parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p>
<p>If you think this provision is so vital why are you shutting it down? Son asked this last year. You spend £21 million buying a retail park, so £6.4 million is a drop in the ocean. Parent states that the boys don't understand why Monmouth will spend £21 million on a retail park but not on them? They feel like they've been kicked in the teeth. Parent says that you cannot lie to the boys.</p>	<p>The Local Authority agrees that specialist provision is required to cater for both genders a wider age range of pupils and to meet the identified ALN needs of Monmouthshire pupils, which would include ASD.</p>

<p>Says her son said why bother going tonight as they are all liars and why should he still go to school as the school is going to close and he will come away with no qualifications. You could give them a million pounds and they still won't believe you. Son is starting his GCSE'S YR11.</p>	<p>The LA will work with , parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p>
<p>States she has every sympathy with everyone coming here to speak, but she is disappointed that no one has looked at why the numbers have dropped? It's very disappointing about the numbers when it's such a simple question and the boys shouldn't be put in this position before the question of numbers dropping has been answered. Parent re-iterates Social Care needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>Mounton House only provides education for a small number of Monmouthshire secondary aged boys on roll (7 in September 2019). There is no provision for primary aged pupils or girls within the Local Authority or for younger children.</p>
<p>Pleased to hear that no decision has been made yet and wants alternatives to be discussed. Concerned that option 3 not in paper but recommended by cabinet. Concerned that looking at closure and not at other options.</p>	<p>Statement</p>
<p>If school closes how long before pupils have to be moved on? Are you going to support them daily, gradually, as my grandson could not cope with going straight from here into a new placement.</p>	<p>The local authority has recognised that closing in December would not be in pupil's best interests and has extended the proposed date of closure to July 2020 to enable year 11 pupils to complete their formal education at Mounton House.</p> <p>For the small number of pupils affected by the proposed closure then Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.</p>
<p>How YR11 will manage and finish Yr 11 if Mounton House closes?</p>	
<p>States son is not statemented and has already been excluded from 2 schools, but attends a mechanic course every Wednesday at Mounton House and is doing really well.</p>	<p>The LA will work with , parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.</p> <p>Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make</p>

	recommendations for alternative provision.
Is there a projection of figures of primary children with SEBD? As states it's going down.	Mounton House only provides education for a small number of Monmouthshire secondary aged boys on roll. In September 2019 Monmouthshire is financially responsible for 6 pupils.
What will happen with new referrals? Will they be stopped?	Annual Review meetings will identify individual pupil needs and make recommendations for alternative provision.
States son came to Mounton House because Llantarnum was knocked down (Torfaen Parent of Ethan Jones). Since he came here the improvement is unbelievable. He feels what's the point now, and made reference to being treated like a mushroom and kept in the dark	The local authority recognises the work of the current staff and noted the work undertaken following the last Estyn Inspection  The LA will work with , parents and pupils affected by the proposed closure to ensure continuity of provision. This could be placement at another special school or a bespoke learning pathway.